



## Book review

### Web Cartography: Developments and Prospects

by Menno-Jan Kraak and Allan Brown

Reviewed by Bin Jiang

Nowadays, maps constitute important graphical content on the World Wide Web (WWW). A simple but typical use of web maps is to indicate the physical location of an organisation as a directional aid for visitors or shoppers. More extensive use of the genre includes interactive maps for tourists, weather forecast maps and real-time traffic maps. Thus, the WWW provides new opportunities and challenges for cartography and related geosciences

Web Cartography outlines the state-of-the-art and, as the subtitle suggests, explores the prospects for web maps. The volume can be used as both a student textbook and as a reference work by those whose professional work includes the dissemination of geospatial information via the WWW. Although written by multiple authors, it is well and coherently organised, with each chapter having a special focus.

The first two chapters set the scene and explore web cartography in the context of modern cartography and its emphasis on visualisation. Here, the author uses a classification of web maps as a thread for the chapters that follow. The classification distinguishes between static and dynamic web maps and each of these classes is further subdivided into view-only and interactive maps. The opening chapter looks at what is special about web maps from a number of different perspectives. The next focuses on visualisation by addressing the question "How do I say what to whom, and is it effective?". The author emphasises visualisation for both communication and visual thinking purposes. The chapter also briefly reviews current developments in mapping cyberspace.

The following chapters discuss the potential of web maps, compare them with paper maps and maps on CD-ROM, and present user profiles drawn from practical experience. Despite the boom in Internet usage, the authors point to the limitations of existing web maps, not least difficulties in manipulation and portability.

The section dealing with web map creation sets out cartographic principles as a foundation for design and publishing. These are equally applicable to visualisation in a more general sense represent an excellent set of guidelines for Internet publishers.

The chapters that follow explore how web maps are being applied to national mapping programmes, tourism, electronic atlases, weather forecasting and real time traffic information services. These provide a broad overview of, and some unique insights into real-life applications, together with some suggestions for



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improving the cartographic quality of web maps. The final chapter explores the prospects for web maps, while two appendices provide useful reference material on file formats, plug-ins, imagery, fonts etc.

The most distinguishing feature of the work is a well-designed 'live' web site that encapsulates its contents and provides hot links to all URLs cited in the hard copy. The editors promise that these links will be updated on a regular basis, so purchase should result in an addition to the bookshelf that has continuing value.

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